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January 28, 2020

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Chairwoman
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Please accept this letter in opposition to the Horse Racing Integrity Act of 2019, HR1754.

I have been a practicing equine veterinarian, living and working in the Richmond, Virginia for nearly 27 years. Besides providing care for my equine patients, I also work as a Regulatory Veterinarian to the Virginia Racing Commission. Having these dual roles gives me a unique perspective. Not only do I work to present equine athletes ready to perform at the peak of their ability, I am also trusted with overseeing their safety and enforcing the regulations related to horse racing in Virginia.

The term “Bleeder” refers to a horse that has blood present in the airway following strenuous exercise. The proper term for this condition is Exercise Induced Pulmonary Hemorrhage, or EIPH. It is the product of a pressure induced failure of the blood/gas barrier within the lungs. The extremely high blood pressure entering the lungs collides with the tremendous negative pressure required for inhalation, resulting in capillary rupture and an escape of blood into the airway. Hemorrhage and edema develop in the gas exchange area of the lungs, resulting in decreased performance and sometimes death. It is an important cause of exercise intolerance. EIPH has been documented for more than 300 years. It occurs in approximately 95% of racehorse – Thoroughbreds, Standardbred, and Quarter Horses.

Racehorses worldwide are selectively bred for speed, resulting in a heart weighing up to 2% of their body mass. In all other mammalian species the heart weighs only .5-1% of their total body mass. The result in the racehorse is a cardiac output that is highest of any species to date.

Virtually all horses bleed some. This leads to inflammation in the region of gas exchange of the lungs. Repeated episodes, even when undetected, lead to fibrosis and loss of elasticity, leading to more significant EIPH and lungs that bleed more easily, due to a weakened blood/gas barrier. Thus the incidence and severity of EIPH normally increases with the age of the equine athlete.

What is Lasix? It is a diuretic with the proper name Furosemide. It is used in all species to treat congestive heart disease and high blood pressure. It increases urine output and lowers circulating blood volume. It is proven to reduce the severity of EIPH. Approximately 70%-90% of race horses compete using Lasix on race day for this reason. Lasix has been used for this purpose for over 40 years. It is not performance enhancing, it is actually performance normalizing, allowing horses to compete up to their potential. There is no scientific basis for the elimination of the use of Lasix. It is veterinarian endorsed, safe, and effective for the treatment/prevention of EIPH.

"Doping" is not a rampant problem in horse racing, and it is not Lasix. Any medication policy must place the health and welfare of the equine athlete first. That EIPH exist is a medical and physiological reality. That every reasonable method available isn't taken to reduce it would be a tragedy for the horse, and injurious to the industry as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Daniels', written over the printed name.

Douglas K. Daniels, DVM